

Begram

Ajmal Yar, Curator Kabul Museum

Located about 60 kilometers north of Kabul, Begram was an ancient city at the junction of the Ghorband and Panjshir valleys, near today's city of Charikar, Afghanistan. Today Begram is a village. Its location made it a key passage from India along the Silk Road leading westwards through the mountains towards Bamiyan.

The treasure of Begram was discovered in 1937. The most spectacular pieces are made of glass and ivory. All glassware has been dated to the first century C.E. The iconography is in many ways unique. One piece shows the Pharos of Alexander and is one of oldest illustrations of the famous third-century B.C.E. Egyptian lighthouse. One side shows the seaport represented by three vessels, the other side shows the statue that graced the Pharos, with two tritons at its foot blowing on conch shells. The beardless figure with a club in his hand is Ptolemy I Soter (367-285 B.C.E), who ordered the lighthouse's construction.

Gandharan ivory artifacts from Begram are similar to artifacts found in the Butkara excavations in Swat in northern Pakistan while other ivory objects show comparisons to sites in southern India. Some of the bangles that adorned one of the three goddess statues were also found in the Begram treasure, a reminder of the mutual fascination between the Greek and Buddhist cultures during the first century B.C.E and earlier.



Curator (Buddhist and Hindu collections)
National Museum of Afghanistan
Ajmal Yar
Tel: +93-700037334
yaarajmal@yahoo.com

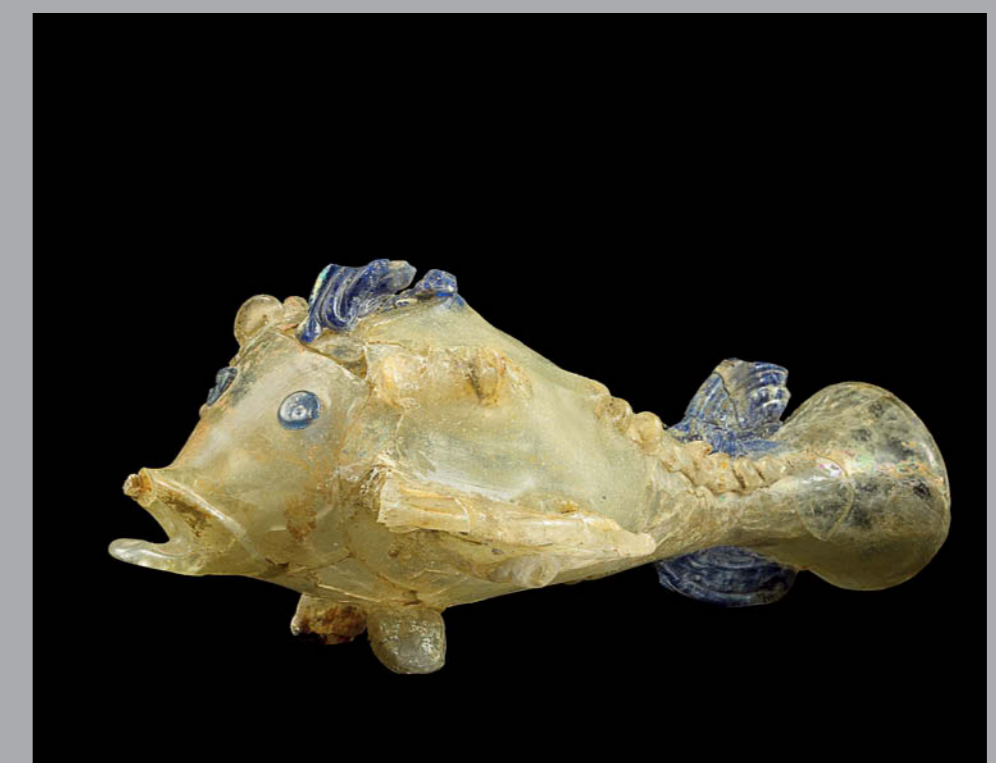
Pictures:
after Pierre Cambon 2007 and
after Umberto Allemandi 2007



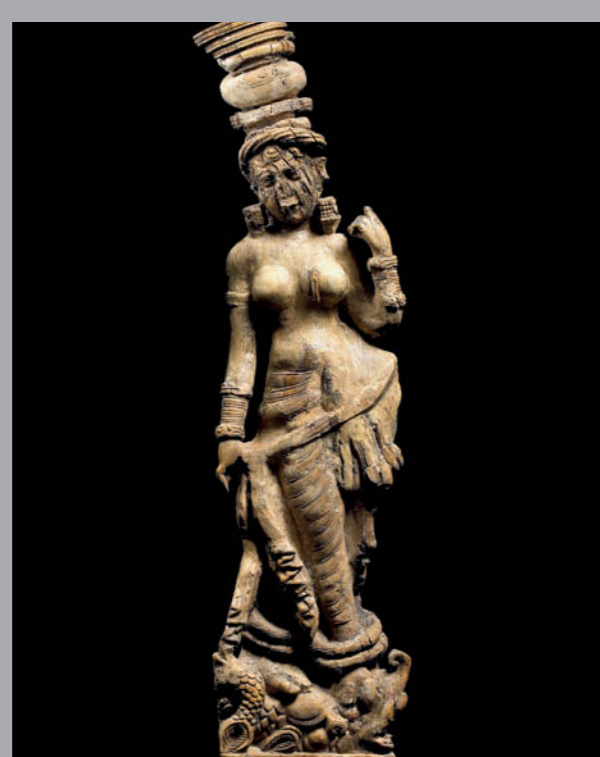
Begram, Blue vase, resille-pattern, glass, 1st c. A.C.E



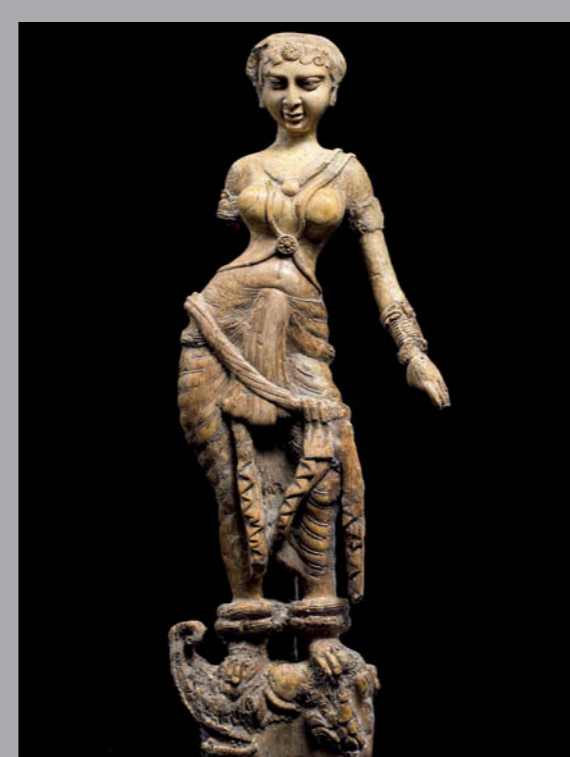
Begram, painted goblet, glass, 1st c. A.C.E.



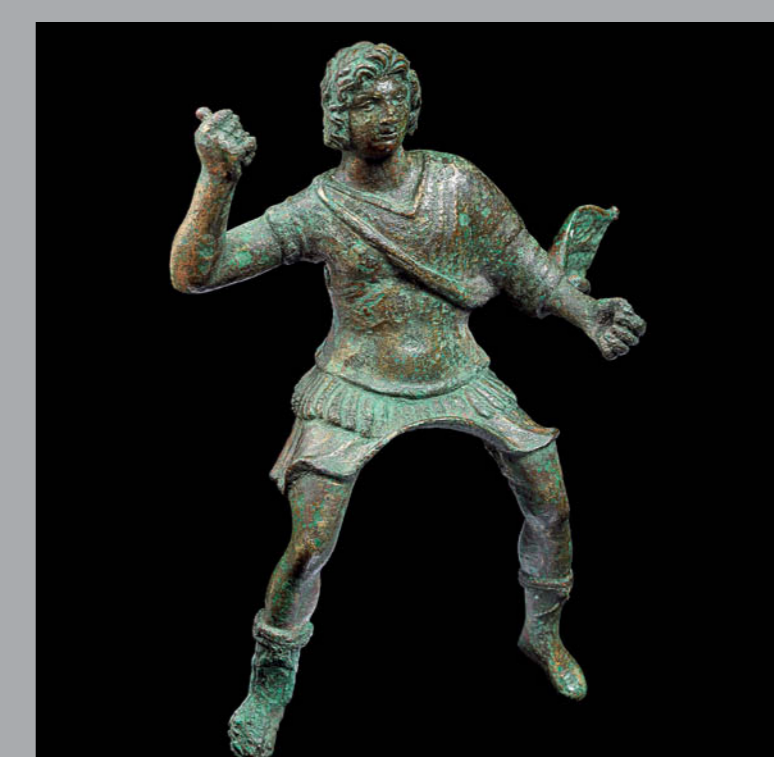
Begram, flask in the shape of a fish, glass, 1st A.C.E.



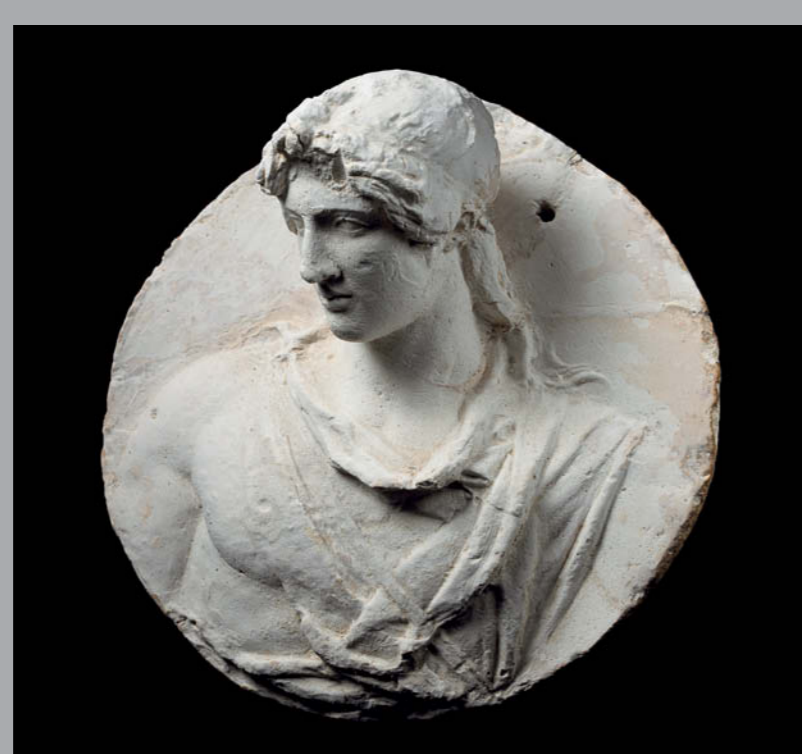
Begram, „River Goddess“, ivory
1st c. A.C.E



Begram, „River Goddess“, ivory
1st c. A.C.E



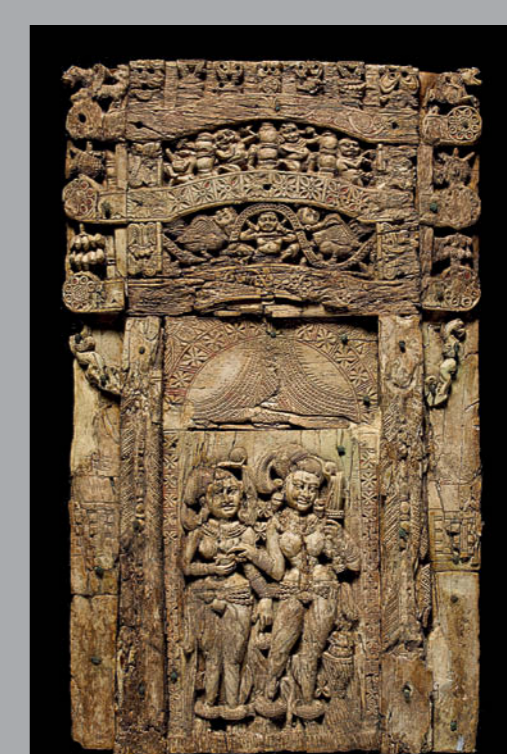
Riding figure, bronze, 1st c. A.C.E.



Begram, medallion, plaster, 1 c. A.C.E.



Begram, openwork panel, ivory, 1st c. A.C.E.



Begram, Large relief panel
ivory, 1st c.A.C.E.